





# Culture and the cash nexus

By John Vaizey

MARK BLAUG (Editor):  
The Economics of the Arts  
272pp. Martin Robertson. £8.45.

Different sets of intellectual activity exist side by side. Sometimes they intersect with interesting results. The practice of the arts and the social sciences have come closest together in the novel; the traditional novel and systematic social observation seem to be looking at some of the same things—hence, it is sometimes said, the decline of the realistic novel—but, that example aside, the arts and the social sciences seem to go merrily along without much getting together. A painter or a musician would often say that their arts are basically spontaneous and life-enhancing while economics, chief of the social sciences, is dismal, rationalistic and diminishing.

The profession of a social scientist does not necessarily kill the capacity to enjoy (or even to take part in) the arts. Keynes, the ballerina, founded a theatre and was at the heart of literary and painting Bloomsbury; Mill wrote well about Coleridge; Sir Claus Moser, the statistician, is a pianist of near professional abilities as well as chairman of the Royal Opera House.

Nevertheless, the writing of social scientists, as social scientists, on the arts has been pretty drab and uninformative. There have been the Marxist critics like Lukács; there have been historians who have sought to put the arts in a historical context; sociologists have followed Weber in setting the arts in their quasi-religious place in modern society. There is not, however, so far as I know, a body of work by social scientists to which a reader could turn and find that his understanding of the arts had been profoundly affected, except that of Marxists, or of Freud and his followers who are (to put it mildly) not conventional social scientists. Even the discussion of aesthetics by philosophers of standing has not been impressive in this century. Art is art; social science is social science; and the two do not meet. I find it puzzling that it should be so.

Two responses are possible. The first is to ask why there should be

a puzzle. The arts are the arts; an architect may build a theatre but we do not expect him to give us new dramatic insight except as an unconvicted benefactor. (Sir Denys Lasdun's National Theatre may not work but at least we've seen it. As Dame Edna Everedge says.) An economist may dilate upon Covent Garden's box-office charges but it will not affect one iota our opinion of *Costi Fan Fan*. The other reaction is, however, exactly the opposite. It is to be puzzled at the lack of connection. This century has seen an enormous growth in the activity of economists, sociologists and psychologists; their mental picture of society has become outside the Marxist world, and especially in America, very much the mental map of the official classes and their hangers-on. At the same time, the people holding this mental map have become (or perhaps have remained, as *The Economics of the Arts* shows, not merely highly dedicated concert, opera, ballet and theatre goers but make up a high proportion of those who actually go there. According to W. J. Baumol and W. C. Bowen, 80 per cent of the employed males who go to performances of concerts, opera, ballet or plays at the National Theatre are in professional and managerial jobs, although only 17 per cent of the population as a whole is in those groups, whereas only 43 per cent are blue-collar workers who make up 68.5 per cent of the population in general.

It is surely a puzzle that so little connection has been made between two major activities, the professional and the recreational, of the same sort of people.

I find it strange that there is not some reinterpretation of the arts by those who, regarding the social sciences as intellectually important and being themselves profoundly moved by music or pictures, should surely wish (in some sense) to "explain" the arts to themselves in their own language. Or, perhaps, the more I reflect upon it, there are several tangential considerations. One is that the social sciences do offer an explanation of the arts. Adopting the so-called value-free position, they see painters, dancers, musicians as people simply pursuing one line rather than another; even, perhaps, as licensed lunatics who earn a poor (or even negative) return

on their investment in their training (as F. P. Santos shows here for male ballet dancers) because they enjoy their work; their "value-free" universe in fact consists of those who "rationally" pursue a policy of maximizing a usually implicit though measurably measurable set of pleasures, and who avoid pain, which includes work. In this universe, a preoccupation with art in any form is "irrational" as, say, religion—that is, neither art nor religion offers a "rational" explanation of what people actually do with their lives whereas the social sciences can explain behaviour. This position is put by Mark Blaug, editor of this book.

Economics is indeed more than a collection of techniques for investigating the workings of an economic system. It is a way of looking at the world, being a special case of a much more general logic of rational action. For that reason, economists are in a little difficulty in appraising activities which appear, at first glance, to have nothing to do with economic ends; their apparatus will not always be equally illuminating but in a surprising number of instances it yields immediate, dramatic insights. So it is, I believe, in the case of the arts.

Behind this view is one more crudely put by T. Moore:

In our economy, under a free market system, we normally assume that the best allocation of resources is determined by the free market. The price of goods and services reflects the cost to society of these services, and the consumer purchases them on the basis of what they are worth to him.

Every dollar spent on the arts represents a dollar of resources which has been transferred from some other use. Normally, therefore, we would believe that a dollar's worth of arts should be equal in subjective value to a dollar's worth of other goods and services. If we lower the price of theatre tickets or opera tickets through a subsidy, consumers will normally buy more. The value to consumers of the marginal purchase of tickets will be equal to the price of the tickets, which in fact is lower than the cost of producing that additional

service. Hence, one would normally argue that it would be a waste of resources to subsidize the arts or any other such field.

He then contradicts this astonishing point of view. But in this universe the arts, like sleep, are recreation. It surely cannot be denied that each of the social sciences is in fact passing through a fairly profound crisis; that their purpose, which was to achieve a more rational, explained, world, and hence a better life, has failed to produce the goods in both senses. Society is not more rationally conducted than it was, and the explanations of the way the world works offered by social scientists have become less and less plausible and less and less compelling. Less and less plausible at the highest level, that is, of explaining how everything happens. In detailed circumstances, micro is known descriptively about society than used to be the case, and knowledge of step-by-step relationships between simple variables has greatly increased. But for those who hoped for a heroic understanding of the totality of the social universe there has been great disappointment. And the sheer enjoyment of life has not increased. Marx, and from an opposite point of view, Freud, explain everything. Anybody who hoped that the social sciences would offer such a total comprehension of the ends of life has been disappointed.

It may be denied that such a hope ever existed. Such a hope is not merely historically incorrect; it is evidently contradicted by much of the work represented in Professor Blaug's collection of essays by different hands. To take a reasonably typical instance: from Tibor Scitovsky, a fringe economist.

It seems a strange irony of fate that our puritanical rejection of pleasure as the ultimate aim of life should have led to a preference system in which the making of money is the main challenge and effortless, pleasureless comfort the main reward.

Professor Scitovsky goes on to show that, in his opinion, America concentrates too much on "earnings", too little on "living". I was trying, with these few examples, to establish that the economic difficulties of the arts have more to do with our pre-

ferences than with our economy; that our very modest appreciation of the arts is part and parcel of our very modest enjoyment of life, and that our Government, miserably mistaken in its policy, is again an integral part of a larger collective preference system, which is fully in keeping with consumers' individual preferences as revealed in the market place.

The rise, and now the fall, of the social sciences as intellectual acceptable explanations of how the world is have accompanied in it way the arts see themselves as seen by the public. It has been the time when the citadels have been captured by the avant-garde, the front-line skirmishers of a revolutionary army have become the crack troops, the corps d'élite of the Establishment Palace. The search for the new, the opening of the frontiers of experience, the excavation of hidden depths, a substitution of chaos for order have all become the very nature of the campaign.

The pursuit of extreme rationality about working and private life which has characterized the social sciences, has been accompanied by a ready acceptance of the nature of art. The dilemma of the agonized Mill, the distinction between the *bourgeois* and the *avant-garde* has become (surely) far more acute, and indeed that the dilemma resolved by dividing the intellect into that part which accepts, as economics or psychology, "true" and that which "enjoys" art. It is in fact to take neither, as Leavis so forcibly says, to fail to take art seriously.

The social sciences cannot explain the "why" of art; indeed I would doubt that they can explain the "why" of anything much; nor do I think they should try. Their task, or at least the task of economics, as I see it, is to describe accurately and carefully bits of the world and to explain relatively stable relationships, perhaps, in the end, it will all add up to a more heroic understanding of the economic universe but so it

there are few signs that this will happen. The differences between economists over most fundamental matters are genuine; anybody who thinks the other side is completely mistaken is revealing the depths to which his partisan feelings run. The moment for a Newtonian revolution is certainly not yet.

Economics, then, can begin to describe (and perhaps to explain) some of the "how" of art. There are many different examples in these essays of how the arts are provided, who their audiences are and what those audiences pay. Some of the findings are fairly obvious, but it is useful to have impressions confirmed and appreciations sharpened. At least, I suppose it is. After a generation's work in criminology, education, industrial relations and economics, it is at least arguable that the jails have never been so full, the schools so empty of hope, the universities less harmonious or the economy in poorer shape. Perhaps it would be better if we knew less; though a moment's thought will show that in fact people do understand crime, education, work and the economy better than they did in 1930 and the possibilities at least exist for rational improvement in these services.

The arts, especially the performing arts, take place in a fog of ignorance. The Gulbenkian Enquiry into Training for the Arts found that nobody had the vaguest idea of how many actors were unemployed, and hence little idea, if any, whether the numbers in training should be increased or decreased or what the relationship between training and employment was. The Enquiry into the Training of Professional Musicians is flailing the same lack of facts. The admirable Misses Brophy and Duffy, the prime movers of WAG, cruelly buffeted by the vicissitudes of the deplorably voted-down PLR Bill, find the same sort of difficulty in discovering what authors earn and who buys their books. If more were known, then the possibility of more effective use of what is available would be obvious. It is a shame even if the immediate effect of clarity might be to reduce spending on the arts. The evidence, for example, that Arts Council expenditure goes to things enjoyed by Londoners and not by others, teachers, students (and tourists), will harden the grumpiness assumed but still crude philistinism of the member for Grimsby, not to mention the fan Spratts of this Parliament.

Professor Blaug will perhaps allow me to say that he holds good cases by justifying Lord Robbins's profoundly civilized essay "Unsolicited Questions in the Political Economy of the Arts", with his own polemic "Does the Arts Council Know What It is Doing?" The Arts Council as an agency for the suppliers of public subsidies for the arts, has been following a reasonably clear policy though (as Richard Findlater says) it has obviously changed from time to time. Chairman and secretaries have changed and as public opinion has altered.

There is one big question—on what basis to subsidize the arts and how to do so most effectively. The reasons for subsidizing the arts are fairly banal and, when spent out, best hidden (see my *Arts and the Amount* obviously depends on tradition (Frankfurt spends more than Manchester) plus infighting (Joanne Lee and Lord Eccles were very good at that). But, eventually, decisions have to be made about how much goes to Covent Garden, how much to the National Theatre, whether it is possible to start at least a semi-permanent opera company in Manchester, and these decisions are probably better taken in the light of information than on hunch, though I suppose that Lord Goodman's hunches are better than most "information". The Arts Council, like the rest of government, has gone for a long time on hunch, though I suppose that Lord Goodman's hunches are better than most "information".

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This study brings together astrology and psychology to enable the reader to gain a more complete, reliable and objective understanding of individual potentialities. paper £3.25.

**Routledge & Kegan Paul**  
39 Store Street, London WC1

It seems true that the English problem under any regime is largely, having willed the end, actually to provide the means. Accordingly, public subsidy is best used when it actively encourages the best in performance and it must depend, for its efficiency, upon a competent body of people to see that people can and do give of their best. At one time, when the artistic establishment was predominantly conservative, there was a bias in favour of "academic" art; now, clearly, there is a bias in favour of "experimental" art. Mendelssohn has given way to Penderecki. The principle of excellence constitutes a sensible decision about which orchestras, which theatres, which galleries to support and an active policy of encouraging the most lively and successful, and trying to rescue those who are slipping.

One problem, however, of supporting the best is that the seeds and the products of Gilbert and Sullivan in Widnes are likely to get less money than Hans Werner Henze at Covent Garden; there can be little doubt of what practically everybody (except, presumably, the Arts Council) would actually prefer. It is idle to deny, then, that patronage is patronizing.

Despite all this, Professor Blaug and his colleagues are desperate to widen choice on the highest of market and democratic principles. According to one view, excellence in performance is associated with a cultivated and experienced audience. The "summer" audience at Covent Garden, which buys its Nureyev-Ponizyn tickets as part of the package, Milwaukee-London-Oxford-Milwaukee, dinner included, is not spread as widely as the programme sellers) to the entire winter as well; the consequence is that applause, often in the middle of arlas, tends to be indiscriminate. As part of the principle of excellence, therefore, people who know about opera should pay less than those who do not. This is shamelessly elitist. It is also extraordinarily difficult to manage. No sensible person could justify the present pricing policy, whereby

what Dame Edna calls "a sweet little English person" can only go to the opera when invited by the Bank of England or the Express group (who have those there), while it is only in West Germany to fly over from Wuppertal rather than go locally. The Russians give tickets to trade unions (unlikely, in present circumstances, to be popular here) and to students (ditto). The question of building up a wider audience is, therefore, beset by problems. As you pass a madrigal group or a Britten steel band in the passage of your local psychiatric hospital, you are part of an Arts Council or Gulbenkian Foundation attempt to widen the audience. Uphill work.

We all have our favourite ideas. I would give PLR to authors and do away with Arts Council subsidies to writers and magazines. I would also subsidize bookshops in public libraries and train book-sellers.

In business techniques, Covent Garden prices, given the present character of the audience, seem to me to be too low. The mind takes wing... But the question remains, where do we go if we said and done, there is much to be said usefully by economists as such about the arts. I think with Professor Blaug (though for somewhat different reasons) that the answer is "yes". It is possible, using the largely quantitative skills to argue against some of the drier ideas for artistic provision, and to make sensible suggestions about what is likely to work.

But of two things I remain sure. One is that of the ultimate (or even proximate) ends of art, subsidy, let alone art itself, nothing that is not banal is likely to be said. And the second is that there is no substitute for experience. The best way to encourage excellence, and to build audiences, is actually to try to do it. Within these limits, there is a lot to do. Not least, I suspect, in causing those well-heeled social-science-trained audiences to take a more humble view of the utility and philosophical bases of the social sciences.

## By the look of things

By Paul Reilly

NOEL CARRINGTON:  
Industrial Design in Britain.  
195pp. Allen and Unwin. £7.50.

Noel Carrington's *Industrial Design in Britain* is well timed, for it describes, mainly at first hand, the efforts that were made between the wars by a small band of dedicated idealists to give their contemporaries of the major suppliers of public subsidies for the arts, has been following a reasonably clear policy though (as Richard Findlater says) it has obviously changed from time to time. Chairman and secretaries have changed and as public opinion has altered.

This book is timely too in that it recalls to our attention many sober criteria such as fitness for purpose, need for design, economy of construction, clarity of intent and above all perhaps, since the author has spent most of his working life in or near printing and publishing, legibility. Many or most of these attributes have in recent years been overtaken by less practical, more ephemeral values such as impact or excitement or fashion or nostalgia or even deliberate irreverence and irrationality. It was of course to be expected that some eyes would be cast against the functional yardsticks of the Bauhaus generation and Mr Carrington does not resent this, though he is right to draw a later generation's attention to its own excesses for to some eyes the when and philanthropic money (though there is no country in the world where that is true), but it does depend, ultimately, upon a market for the artistic wares.

have matched the creeping squalor of today.

To take just one area that was of particular concern to the early champions of the Design and Industries Association—public lettering—can we honestly claim much improvement today? Admittedly there have been some improvements, but they have been made by some public authorities such as British Rail, British Airports and the Ministry of Transport, whose alphabets are models for the world. And Noel Carrington can rightly claim much credit for that—but what of our present-day shopkeepers and shopfitters with their increasingly brazen, flamboyant, over-sized, over-coloured and over-embellished signs? What of the clutter of universal indifference to the environment? Should not the present-day members of the DIA rekindle the fires that were once so bravely lit by pre-war watchdogs like Hest, Leach, Leach, Curwen, Clough Williams-Ellis and Carrington himself?

Mr Carrington's book is moreover timely in two further respects, for its publication coincides with two very different design manifestations. As one end of the spectrum we are witnessing a dangerously belated revival of concern for engineering design, while at the other there is happily an almost irresistible tide in favour of handwork and artist craftsmanship. The very change of title for the official agency concerned with design—from Council of Industrial Design to Design Council—illustrates underlines the new emphasis on engineering, a skill or discipline barely considered by the early members of the DIA, while the establishment of the Crafts Advisory Commission, for example, heralds the introduction of the role of their team-mates, the industrial designers, and to the new generation of artist-craftsmen a recall to common sense and to the virtues of fitness for purpose, however fantastical the purpose.



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كتاب في الأصل







## The age of clutter

By Mark Girouard

NICHOLAS COOPER:

*The Opulent Eye*  
Late Victorian and Edwardian  
Taste in Interior Design  
258pp. The Architectural Press.  
£8.95.

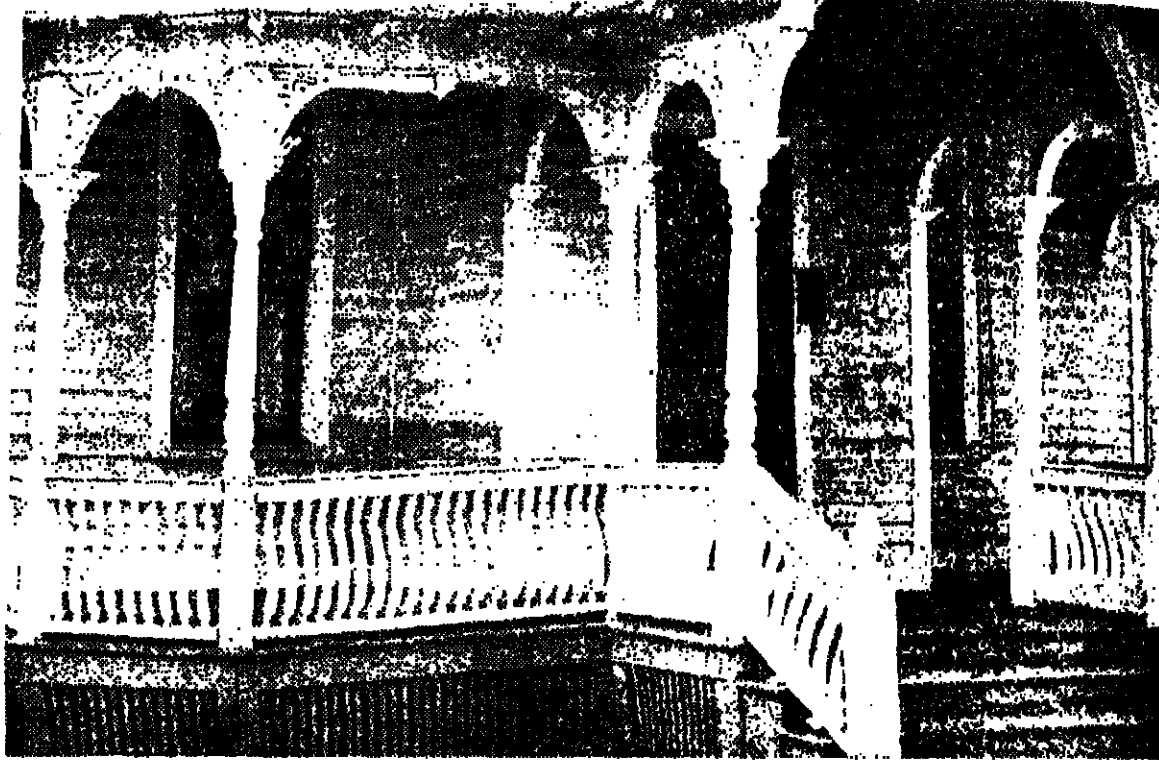
Bedford Lemere entered the photographic business in 1881, at the age of seventeen. He was still taking photographs when he dropped dead in 1944, in the same studio (originally his father's) which he had entered sixty-three years before. Both his early and his later negatives have mostly disappeared, but for the years from 1889 to 1914 many thousands survive, and now belong to the National Monuments Record. They cover, in particular, the houses of the upper and upper-middle classes in fascinating and exhaustive detail. A selection of 200, almost all interiors, have now been reproduced with a long and interesting introduction and notes to the illustrations by Nicholas Cooper, who works at the National Monuments Record and knows the collection better than anyone. The publishers have mercifully sworn the pseudo-Victorian cliché which has disfigured at least one of their recent layouts; the book is soberly but handsomely produced, and each plate is given the full page which it deserves and needs.

The camera cannot lie, but it can give the wrong impression. Bedford Lemere needs to be treated with caution. His long exposures on a plate camera could soak in every detail of a large room and reduce it to the manageable scale of a whole-plate print, which the eye could absorb at a glance. But the human eye does not have a large field of focus; it takes in a room by darting round it and superimposing a multitude of separate impressions. One could never actually see rooms in the way Bedford Lemere photographed them. Moreover he never used (perhaps for technical reasons, could not use) the techniques developed by photographers today, of photographing objects in the foreground proportionately large, as (more or less) they appear to the eye. His rooms are viewed as though by someone taking several steps back from them, as in the still-eye view of a stage set. Finally, colour was important in almost all the rooms he photographed (far more than in the painted rooms of the Modern

Movement), but Bedford Lemere was of necessity limited to black and white.

His technique was as a result an unflattering one for the type of interior he mainly dealt in. It made crowded rooms seem grossly overcrowded, and turned what may have been agreeable clutter into unbearable clutter. The quiet good taste of the interiors of Great Tangle, Manor designed by Philip Webb for a visually discriminating solicitor, Wickham Flower, comes like a haven of rest among his other photographs. They make abundantly clear not so much that uncrowded rooms are nicer than crowded ones, but that they photograph better, at least when the Bedford Lemere technique is being used to photograph them. It was a lesson learnt by the photographers of *Country Life*, who worked very much in the Bedford Lemere tradition. Their technique used to be (perhaps still is): to weed out the contents of the rooms they photographed by clearing the foreground, removing sofas and armchairs, sweeping away books, papers and ornaments, and often rearranging windows. However valuable as architectural records, as social documents such photographs are unreliable, not to say valueless.

But did Bedford Lemere rearrange his rooms? Nicholas Cooper says he did, but does not reveal how much. Judging by results he can scarcely have weeded out clutter; but did he move the furniture? Did he, for instance, in search of the picturesque put chairs crooked where a modern photographer might set them straight? It would be interesting to know, but is probably impossible to find out. On the whole, one gets the impression that his photographs are far more reliable evidence as to how rooms were arranged by their owners than *Country Life* ones are. If one wants to follow Glasgow businessmans, Birmingham bankers or Mayfair hostesses to their native habitats, if one wants to see how Edward VII's friend Mrs Willie James housed her guests or how Nelly Melba furnished her boudoir, Bedford Lemere (granted the reservations already expressed) will show one. What he won't show is Mrs Willie James or Melba themselves in their drawing-rooms or boudoirs; for he, like *Country Life*, excluded the human figure



A house on Litchfield Avenue, Torrington, Connecticut: one of sixty black-and-white photographs by Philip Trager in *Photographs of Architecture* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, \$2.95). Trager, as Samuel L. Green II writes in his introduction, "belongs to the tradition of 'straight' objective photography", and the pictures in this book are stunning in their precision of detail. They include examples of nineteenth-century commercial buildings as well as many fine studies of New England domestic architecture. The photographs themselves are to be exhibited in various galleries and museums in the United States during the coming year: they can be seen at the Museum of Art, Science and Industry in Bridgeport, Connecticut, from March 11, and at the Witkin Gallery in New York from March 22.

from his photographs, except on the rarest occasions.

To say that his photography can make rooms look worse than they were is not to say that some of them were not pretty awful. Nicholas Cooper has rightly tried to give a representative selection, not just the cream, and many of the rooms in *The Opulent Eye* are depressing evidence of what money divorced from imagination can achieve. The 1890s, when Bedford Lemere got into his stride, was away at the tail-end of a decorative era. In the 1870s house-proud wives (encouraged by decorators) had rented from mid-Victorian bleakness and heaviness and enlivened their rooms with pretty objects and delicate furniture; by the 1890s the reaction had not out of hand, and what had been a taste for becoming more of a nervous tic. Rooms had silted up, and reaction became inevitable; one can see its beginnings in Bedford Lemere, along the very different routes suggested by Webb or Mackintosh. Nicholas Cooper perceptively suggests that electricity may have encouraged the reaction; cluttered rooms were more responsive to romantic chiaroscuro than to all-

over glare, and clean electricity made light colours much more practical. To electricity one could probably add the photographic techniques of Bedford Lemere and his colleagues; like the electric light bulb, even if not quite so literally, they presented rooms in a new light.

Of course the silting-up and subsequent chucking-out process was not peculiar to the Bedford Lemere years. Writers in the 1930s, a vintage decade for chucking-out, looked back on the late Victorian period with complacency; they had got away from all that. Their reactions still tend to be repeated today (Nicholas Cooper has a share in them) as though nothing has changed; but one has only to dip into the magazines or look at the rooms of one's friends (or possibly of one's self) to see that clutter is coming back with a vengeance. What else are Portobello Road and Camden Passage for except to supply it? But photographers now know how to deal with it. Their pretty colours and carefully chosen details can make our mess and junk look human and lively, not just chaotic; they have gone one up on Bedford Lemere.

## Hailes haul

The Newhailes Collection, comprising the printed books and manuscripts belonging to Lord Hailes, the eighteenth-century Scottish historian and man of letters, has been accepted by the Inland Revenue in lieu of estate duty because of its national and historic interest. The trustees of the estate have expressed the wish that the collection should be allocated in the National Library of Scotland. This wish will be taken into account by the Secretary of State for Scotland who is responsible for allocating the collection to whichever national heritage public collection in the United Kingdom he considers the most appropriate. Before reaching his decision on allocation of the collection, the Secretary of State for Scotland will be seeking the advice of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts and the Advisory Panel on Printed Books. Any library interested in having the collection allocated to it should apply in writing before March 11 to Mr R. D. Jackson, Scottish Education Department, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh EH1 3JH.

## The rhetorician of space

By John Pope-Hennessy

L. D. and HELEN S. ETLINGER:  
*Botticelli*  
216pp. Thames and Hudson. £4.50  
(paperback, £2.50).

RAB HATFIELD:

*Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*  
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198pp with 68 illustrations. Princeton University Press. £11.80  
(paperback, £4.85).

KENNETH CLARK:

*The Drawings by Sandro Botticelli for Dante's Divine Comedy*  
218pp. Thames and Hudson. £35.

At Oxford people called me Botticelli. The name meant, or was meant to mean, not just that I was interested in Italian art, but that the paintings I preferred were mannered, stylized and non-realistic. The real Botticelli was none of these things. Admittedly Borensen, in 1896, had claimed that he was "haunted by the idea of communicating the unembodied values of touch and movement," and Oppé, in a wretched little book that was still read in the 1930s, had issued a solemn warning: "One can say of him what one can say of any man; one can take him or leave him. It might be better to leave him. If one has too much to do with him one loses the true sense of life." But the facts speak for themselves. Botticelli was a confident, incisive artist, and was, with the single exception of Leonardo, the most inventive, most influential and most forward-looking Florentine painter of the later fifteenth century.

L. D. and Helen S. Etlinger, the authors of *Botticelli*, would demur at these three epigrams. They do not, to their credit, take a wholly reactionary view of Botticelli, but they fail consistently to recognize how great his stature as an artist was. The trouble starts with his first work that they discuss, the "Portrait" which Botticelli added to six figures of Victories by the Accademia Mercanzia, according to the *Estimate* of Botticelli, a seventh panel, "had little difficulty in producing a painting in accordance with the rest of the series." But the truth (as a visitor to the Uffizi can establish for himself) is that he did nothing of the kind. He changed the viewing point of the throne, the figure seated on it and the step beneath read in a more rational way, and to the figure itself he added a concomitant of naturalism, a face and neck rendered with marvellous facility and strong muscular hands which suggest that the seated woman is thoroughly capable of wielding the mace she holds across her knees.

In Botticelli's work, from the beginning almost to the end, space is employed as a rhetorical device. It is so used in the "St Augustine" in the Ognissanti. Botticelli, the Etlingers assure us, "has painted St Augustine ensconced in his cosy cell." But what cell could be less cosy than the cell depicted in this fresco, with its cornice plunging into depth, with its letters and open book enhancing the spatial thrust, and a shelf behind used, not as it is used in Ghirlandajo's companion fresco as a repository for domestic odds and ends, but as a means of isolating the Saint's visionary head? A year later, in the frescoed "Annunciation" from S. Martino alla Scala, the spatial penetration establishes the drama of the encounter between the Virgin and the Angel, and the Virgin (one of the most vivid symbols of humility in the whole of painting) and the Angel alighting on the left, while in the S. Barnaba altarpiece in the Uffizi (whose "basic form" seems to the Etlingers "fairly straightforward") the handling of the architectural setting is of unparalleled audacity. It would be wrong to suggest that the Etlingers are oblivious of this aspect of Botticelli's work—they provide a very good example for example of the fresco of the "Temptations of Moses" in the Sistine Chapel—but they tend to give it less emphasis than it deserves.

They believe, moreover, that Botticelli's "interest in anatomy always remained no more than skin deep" and that the early "St Sebastian" in Berlin "is lacking in any detailed treatment of the human body." Yet no one who troubles to compare the beautifully rendered feet and knees and pectoral muscles of the "St Sebastian" with Antonio del Pollaiuolo's "Marterdom of St Sebastian" in the National Gallery can doubt that his more representation Botticelli's painting is the more sophisticated and accomplished of the two. One suspects that the Etlingers, pushed to the point, would claim that realistic images become less realistic when they are translated into terms of line. This fallacy was exposed half a century ago in Yoshino's book on Botticelli. It leads the Etlingers to misinterpret even the central figure of the "Birth of Venus", which is for them "anything but a document of classical revival." The deeply sloping shoulders, the elongated body, the circular breasts all bespeak Botticelli's preference for International Gothic rather than classical proportions. Yet the Venus is a document of classical revival; it has nothing whatever to do with International Gothic, and looks forward to the style of the mid-sixteenth century and especially to Bronzino. Only in Botticelli's last Savoyesque paintings does this forward innovative thrust abate.

Botticelli has the benefit of one of the best monographs ever devoted to a quattrocento painter. Written by Horbert Horne, it was published sixty-nine years ago, and it is surprising that no modern publication has so far reissued it. Very little that has been written since, save for the literature of the great mythologies, has added significantly to Horne's findings, and it could be argued that the prime need today was for generalised studies and not for more thorough study of the genesis of individual works. This is the view adopted by Rab Hatfield in his excellent, highly articulate volume on Botticelli's "Adoration of the Magi" in the Uffizi. The painting was commissioned early in the 1470s by Gasparre dal Lama for an ill-fated altar dedicated to the Epiphany on the entrance wall of S. Maria Novella. Gasparre himself was a figure of great importance; he was a speculator and exchange broker, who as a young man was had up for appropriating revenues he should have turned over to the city, reestablished himself, and then in 1476 was sent to Germany.

Botticelli's painting is remarkable on two different grounds. While it is not the first "Adoration of the Magi" in which the Virgin and Child are set centrally (it was in fact preceded by a year or two by the Pucci tondo in the National Gallery), it is the first iconography of the scene to the elevated intellectual level on which it is portrayed in 1481 in the great "Adoration of the Magi" of Leonardo da Vinci. It breaks away from conventional pictures of the Adoration, and represents what Hatfield rightly describes as "a specifically Eucharistic action, the sacramental oblation." Containing as it does a number of portraits (of the Medici, the donor and the painter), the identity of which has sometimes been questioned, but is here treated in a positive and convincing way, it seems to have established Botticelli's reputation as one of the greatest artists of his time. Especially suggestive is a reconstruction of the light conditions in which the painting was originally seen, and of the effect which these seem to have exercised on its tonality.

Botticelli is commended by the Etlingers as "a story teller" and as "the best theatrical producer" employed on the wall frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. Neither of these expressions gives a fair indication of his genius as an illustrator. Whether we look at the smitten followers of Corah or at ancillary figures like the woman carrying a child, or at the two corks in the mysterious scene of the "Temptation of Christ" (there is a beautiful detail of this in the Etlingers' book), it transpires very clearly that Michelangelo owed a substantial debt to Botticelli when he conceived the great paragon, doom-laden figures in the fresco of the "Flood." In the "Calumny of Apelles" the three groups of figures are of unequalled vividness and this same quality is carried through into the great paragon, doom-laden figures in the fresco of the "Flood." In the "Calumny of Apelles" the three groups of figures are of unequalled vividness and this same quality is carried through into the great paragon, doom-laden figures in the fresco of the "Flood." In the "Calumny of Apelles" the three groups of figures are of unequalled vividness and this same quality is carried through into the great paragon, doom-laden figures in the fresco of the "Flood."

by their psychology as by their form. But the full range of the gift can be seen only in one work, the illustrations to the *Divine Comedy*.

Everything about the Dante drawings is enigmatic. They were known, at least by reputation, to an early writer on Florentine art, the Anonymous Gaddiano, who tells us that they were on white vellum and were made for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici; and they, or the earlier drawings that Botticelli prepared for engraving, are mentioned again by Vasari. With his bias towards large-scale public commissions, Vasari depicted the artist's introspective involvement with Dante as "a distraction... that was the cause of infinite disorder in his life." In the seventeenth century a few of the drawings surfaced in the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden (these sheets are now in the Vatican), and much later eighty-five of them turned up in Paris and were sold to William Beckford. Waagen, visiting Hamilton Palace, recognized them as Botticelli's, and in 1882 they were bought for Berlin, and are now partly in East Berlin and partly at Dählmann. Five years later they were published in collective by Lipmann, and it is through these reproductions or reproductions of these reproductions that they have hitherto been known.

They have now been rephotographed and illustrated, in a reduced format, with a sensibility and care that enables us in effect to read them for the first time. The task of mediating between the drawings and people who are less than perfectly familiar with Botticelli and with the *Divine Comedy* is performed, with superlative accomplishment, by Lord Clark.

The enigma of the Dante drawings is not simply a matter of their history. They were made with a metal stylus, were then in part redrawn in pen, and finally in three cases (three and a half if one counts the illustrations to *Inferno* XI) were coloured. It has often been denied that the colour was applied by Botticelli, and sometimes that Botticelli was himself responsible for redrawing the outlines in ink, but Lord Clark, surely correctly, dismisses these objections. The Dante drawings therefore consist of ninety-two sheets, three of which were brought to their final state, while the remainder are in varying degrees incomplete. In the earlier drawings, for example, Botticelli operated like a manuscript illuminator in a narrow rectangular field. In the later drawings, however, the image is as it were created before our eyes.

As can be seen in the illustration to *Purgatorio* XXX, the artist started by placing the main figures, Dante and Virgil, the alchemist Capocchio and the countess Adam of Brescia, roughly in the centre of the page, in such a way as to establish an emotional rather than a formal relationship between them, and added, in the most summary fashion, an indication of part of the background of the scene.

The same procedure is followed in *Purgatorio* VIII. Sometimes the stylus-drawn figures are so faint and tentative that one cannot be absolutely sure of the part they would have played in the completed sheet, and only when they were overdrawn in pen do they become emphatic and immutable. Thus in the illustration of the Gluttons in *Purgatorio* X two groups are re-inforced "in pen," while a third is fugitive.

Once the main figures had been settled, the secondary figures were filled in, sometimes elaborately, sometimes in a sketchy way. The process of expanding outwards from the main figures accounts for the intensity and freedom of the narratives, which were not subjected to any compositional constraints. It would be futile to later in what order the drawings were produced, or over how long a period of time. A terminal date in the late 1490s, supported by Lord Clark, is very probable, but whether the drawings were begun in 1492, as is suggested by the date of the previous edition, is anybody's guess. What is clear is that the drawings form part of an illustrative revolution which took place in Florence in the last ten or fifteen years of the fifteenth century, or in the previous decade, in Botticelli's battle with and in the Pollaiuolo-inspired "Battle of the Centaurs" of Michelangelo.

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# King of the Great Frontier

By Carl Bridenbaugh

K. R. PHILIP and ELIJAH WEST  
(Editors):  
Essays on Walter Prescott Webb  
The Walter Prescott Webb  
Memorial Lectures  
123pp. £5.20.

GREGORY M. TOBIN:  
The Making of a History  
Walter Prescott Webb and "The  
Great Plains"  
184pp. £8.25.  
University of Texas Press.

"He who launches a thesis catches hell anyway and cannot escape by being timid," Walter Prescott Webb declared as he boldly explained what he meant by "the great frontier." It was always "high adventure" for this man to think out research, organize, and write a history. Especially here, in this issue of his last book, *The Great Frontier* (1959), in which he displayed a power of sweeping generalization unmatched by any American historian, and few others anywhere, since 1890 when Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan published *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*.

Who was Walter Prescott Webb, and why is he so important to our time? He was an uncommon historian, and to grasp the significance of his books, one must understand the unique combination of the man and the environment in which he lived so long—Texas, the Great Plains, the South. His accomplishment was determined by "the play of the contingent and the unforeseen" chance and environment governed his entire life. It might be said that Walter Webb's career is a rural version of the American success story. In the lingo of the cow country he was a maverick, not merely locally in West Central Texas but among his northerners.

Walter Prescott Webb, a son of Casner Webb, a schoolteacher-farmer late of Louisiana, was born in 1888 in Southeast Texas, "the Old South without the milder," as it was called. From the age of four, however, the small boy grew to manhood as a "Mangrove Frontiersman" in West Central Texas on the edge of the nineteenth-century meridian. Throughout his childhood Walter Webb never encountered or felt any of the fabled romance of the West, but, on the treeless and arid flatlands, he both witnessed and ultimately participated in the struggle of the second generation of farmers with nature. And he decided very early that agriculture was not for him.

In the three-county area of Texas that he knew in the 1890s, he "could remember meeting very few elderly people, one foreigner, hardly any blacks, and only one farmer who could be described as well-educated." As a mere boy, Walter Webb developed, unconsciously perhaps, a hostility to anything cultural not directly related to the natural environment. This was a truly provincial reaction. Fortunately for him, he was reared in a family of a schoolteacher and in a house where there were a few good books and a weekly newspaper; also he had the good luck to have a few really good teachers. Accordingly he obtained a better education than did most people in West Texas, though he admitted later in life that it was unbalanced, spasmic, and incomplete. However, it was naturally drawn to literature and from childhood on he wanted to be a writer. He tried his hand at short stories without success; later on, while teaching school, he wrote and published several articles on local folklore.

Sometime in 1904 this sixteen-year-old misfit, who loved books and wanted to get away from life on a farm, sent a letter to the children's column of *Sunny South*, a small magazine published in Atlanta. In it he pathetically inquired whether he could submit a story about his dog and expressed an eagerness to get better education. By a minor miracle, William E. Hinds, an elderly businessman of Brooklyn, New York, happened to read the letter and determined to help the lad. Webb and Hinds never met but, through correspondence, the New Yorker counseled the youthful Texan, sent him books and subscriptions to magazines, advised him to enter the University of Texas at Austin, and periodically lent him money for his college training—in time all of these loans were repaid.

In an entirely different way, accident played its part when, earlier, E. Temple Peters, Webb's worldly-wise teacher and later his colleague, not only taught him enough to enable him to qualify for a teaching certificate but, as his pupil recalled later, "how to spit water, have our shoes shined, send candy to our dates, wear clean linen, rubber-soled shoes and tailor-made clothes, if we could afford it, and to stay at good hotels." When the opportunity came to move from farm to city, this young man was far better prepared for the experience than most hayseeds.

After a brief stretch of teaching

high school and finding it unrewarding, Webb was working in 1915 as a bookkeeper for an optician in San Antonio when the lightning struck. Unforeseen developments at Austin made possible an appointment; he was to teach a course in historical method, though as an undergraduate he had taken only two courses in the department of history. Beginning as an academic maverick, he remained one all of his life. It was almost a decade before he succeeded in establishing himself as an "Americanist." Clashing professional pressures for him to make out a "field" for himself in an old-fashioned department confused and baffled him. The advice offered in 1920 by a wise professor of English did not penetrate Webb's ken until years afterward. "One day [Professor E.] Tremblay said to me, 'Webb, you are fundamentally a pioneer, a frontiersman and there is nothing you can do about it.' Finally, when he came to realize this, he found his true métier and quickly became the rarest of mavericks—a frontier intellectual."

Webb's colleagues in the department of history could not recommend him for promotion until he gave them testimony in print of his merits as a historian. Accordingly, in 1922, he went north to the University of Chicago for graduate study. Impatient to get the degree but far from being interested in his courses in either American or European history, he took only a mere five months in residence, the preliminary examination failed. Although Professor William E. Dodd (later ambassador to Nazi Germany) urged him to pursue the degree, the Texan returned to Austin, ambivalent about the setback, something which he would never forget. After another fling at writing short stories, he concluded that he could never be a successful writer of fiction and set about investigating and writing about the country in which he had lived since the age of four. Without being aware of it, he approached the subject as Professor Keasbey had taught him to do with the history of institutions. Ideas came as a result of intuition or in a logical sequence, but piece by piece, and he worked away between 1924 and 1930 on a book about the west-

ern plains considered as a distinct environment that supported a culture of its own.

*The Great Plains* was published at Boston in 1931 and immediately won a wide audience, both lay and professional. Almost overnight Walter Webb, a late-bloomer, found himself acclaimed a famous historian: the University of Texas wisely accepted the book as a dissertation and conferred on him the PhD degree. Four years later appeared *The Texas Rangers*, a richly detailed study of a frontier institution. Webb was recognized by English scholars and invited to give the Commonwealth Lectures at London; during the Second World War he was the Barnum Professor in the Queen's College, Oxford. In the United States, Chicago made a fine gesture by conferring an honorary degree upon the former graduate student who had failed his preliminary examination; and he was elected president of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association and the American Historical Association—the latter being the highest honour the profession awards. It would have been characteristic if this decidedly non-academic man, having beaten the system, had muttered to himself: at last the herd has taken back the maverick. In addition to the honours, a contract with King Vidor, a fellow Texan, to act as adviser in the making of a film of *The Texas Rangers* for their silver centennial, royalties from his books, and fees from lectures—all cannily invested in Austin real estate—made him a rich man who could afford fine clothes and to stay at the best hotels.

After producing a masterpiece of regional history, Webb moved on to the national scene and brought out in 1935 *Midnight on the Border* (1935). *Midnight on the Border* was a polemical work, replete with irony and ideas, in which he explained why the South was "the Nation's



An advertisement for the Calgary Stampede and Rodeo produced by the Burns and Cooper agency in Canada; it appears in *Modern Publicity* for 1977 (see page 122).

## Send in the marines

By Norman Stone

DAVID HEALY:  
Gunboat Diplomacy in the Wilson  
The US Navy in Haiti, 1915-1916  
268pp. University of Wisconsin  
Press. £10.50.

Late in July 1915, American marines landed at Port-au-Prince, capital of Haiti, to restore order. The country's almost permanent political crisis had come to a climax when an ousted president was torn to pieces in the grounds of the French legation. There had been a lengthy prelude to the Americans' intervention, in that foreigners had already taken over the Bank of Haiti and had to

the Americans (profiting from the European war, which kept arms steady from intervening) divided on permanent occupation. They denied the popular candidate, Rosville Bobo, a chance of the presidency, and enforced the election of a stooge, Dr. Duménil, who eventually signed a treaty guaranteeing a degree of American involvement in government affairs. There were risings in the north, by confusedly nationalist guerrilla forces, the *cacos* (who almost deserved the title "Black Jacobins").

After some relatively economical Cullen, order reigned until 1934, when Roosevelt pulled out the marines. The American presence did little more than scratch the surface of the country (and of course the backs of some politicians, Haitian and Ameri-

can). It must count despite the competition—as the least beneficial occupation of a backward state by a civilized power in modern times. Even the Austrians in Bosnia did better—though they got no recognition of it in the lectures addressed to them by the same President Wilson who ordered the occupation of Haiti.

David Healy in *Gunboat Diplomacy in the Wilson* Era has addressed himself to the antecedents and the initial pacification, and election of a stooge president. Admiral Caperton, who commanded the affair, comes out of it with a surprising amount of credit. He was clever in manipulating the politicians, and his subordinate, Captain Beach—who spoke good French—was very sympathetic to the Haitians' point of view. Others in the American team were demoralized by the Haitians' resistance.

Apparently, Southerners were chosen on the grounds that they would understand the negro. On official reckoning, for instance, "There are fine-looking, well-educated, polished men here, but they are real niggers beneath the surface. What the people of Norfolk and Portsmouth would say if they saw me bowing and scraping to these cacos, I do not know." Of course, order was restored, and Haiti knew a period of political stability. Foreigners' bonds were paid; a road or two got built; some money came from the United States (though in the first period Admiral Caperton used his own money for relief work). At the end, the country was still largely illiterate, poverty-stricken, and over-populated. It was only one of the many "dictatures pour rien" that Haiti had had.

Professor Healy's account is modest, authoritative, sensible. It is well written, and the judgments are often acute (the author appreciates quite how severe can be the tyranny exerted by squinting persons over ostensible great-estate owners). He does not discuss Haitian society very far—in particular, voodoo and its political implications (which were vital to an understanding of the *caco* revolt). He does not discuss the Haitian people's resistance to the occupation, or the Haitian people's resistance to the occupation, or the Haitian people's resistance to the occupation.

To put the occupation of Haiti into a larger framework of American "imperialism" in this period would of course have been beyond the scope of this monograph, which notes the less convincingly shows how far "imperialism" development reflected local conditions in the semi-colony more than general con-

President Wilson never seems to have been embarrassed at the idea that there might have been some contradiction between the self-determination he preached in Europe and matters and the interventionism he practiced elsewhere. Lloyd George said of Poland's getting independence that it was "like handing a clock to a monkey." Such was the American view of Haiti. In the first generation after the Haitian revolution, Poles were automatically given Haitian citizenship. Not many Poles were recruited, but for many years there was a village of redneck Poles at the west of Port-au-Prince. In the 1920s, there were Polish economic missions in both Haiti and Liberia, in an effort to establish Poland's informal overseas empire. Imperialism was a matter of lesser flesh biting little fleas, and Haiti still remains at the end of the chain.

No 1 Problem". And in 1952 he launched *The Great Frontier*, a book containing his greatest generalization and one read round the world. The late Arnold Toynbee described him as a historian of singular imaginative power: "He managed to combine mastery of a special area with a vision of the total history of the world."

In 1931 the first critical reviewers of *The Great Plains* were uncertain how they ought to classify the book: as history, as sociology, or as geography. Their puzzle suggests the genuine novelty of the work in thesis, in organization, and in subject matter. The question posed by the Texas maverick was: what happened when the celebrated American (English) pioneer stepped out of the well-watered woodlands of the eastern United States and attempted to settle west of the ninety-eighth meridian (beyond the first of the states across the Mississippi River)? He could not defend himself against the rapid discharge of arrows by well-mounted Plains Indians, nor kill buffalo when on foot, and he was of little use on the tough prairie sod; his efforts to grow grain fruitless; and agricultural techniques hitherto so productive proved ineffectual. And there were many other problems. The discouraging words for the pioneer were wholly new and disarming scene where "the total environment" was so different from any he had known that he had either to modify radically his time-honoured folkways and institutions or to devise new ones suited to the Great Plains. Merely to survive he had to make a complete adaptation.

Far more of a thinker and feeler than a researcher among documents—documents never helped as much as his memory, his eyes, and ears—the professor drew heavily on his intimate knowledge and experience and above all drew on his powerful imagination to describe how the newcomers from the East gradually discovered and fashioned the local techniques necessary to accommodate themselves to life on the treeless flatlands where water was scarce. In short he was a poet creating a work of art rather than a scholar writing a monograph. The Texas maverick was a poet creating a work of art rather than a scholar writing a monograph. The Texas maverick was a poet creating a work of art rather than a scholar writing a monograph.

Long before most observers, Webb had realized that it was the products of the Industrial Revolution in the East that enabled the pioneers to come west, man, horse, and armed with the first Colt revolvers (six-shooters), the Texas Rangers were able to overpower the Plains Indians and the Mexicans in fighting, and he served as a model institution for such celebrated police forces as the Mounties of the Canadian Northwest. As grain-growing gave way to cattle-grazing on the open range, the hard-working, badly paid, and maverick cowboy emerged as the central figure in the place of the eastern wooden-rail or stone variety; and because springs and brooks were lacking almost everywhere on the great plains, the cowboy introduced the drilled well and the type windmill to draw water from great depths. Land laws had to be altered, and the English law of riparian rights changed radically to meet the needs of all who lived near, as well as those who lived on, a stream. A new literature of land and crop grew, and the cowboy's political bourgeois to give expression to economic maladjustments (Webb's own political views were populist and he was dubbed a "radical" in Mississippi because of his crusade to save water). "The salient truth," he contended, "is that the West cannot be understood as a mere extension of things Eastern."

Imaginatively conceived and skillfully framed, and presented in a clear, logical, and crisp style, the subject *The Great Plains* was a fascinating book, sometimes ironic, often witty, that challenged the reader with its novelty. It was, and remains, a work of art, the author's finest, and most complete achievement and a permanent contribution not alone to American but to all modern history.

Success in writing about the region in which he had been nurtured spurred Webb to expand his ideas about environment and history. He glimpsed the primary significance of a great frontier in world history since the time of the

discoveries. In his spacious view: the great Frontier consists of all the new lands discovered by Columbus and his associates around 1500... comprising three continents and more than half of a fourth, and thousands of islands in the then-unexplored seas... Now set over against this vast area... the wage of land we know as Europe, the homeland, [the Metropolis]. . . . This thesis is that the interaction between the civilized metropolis of Europe and the uncultured Great Frontier exerted a profound influence on the drama of Western Civilization [for] more than 450 years and has largely determined the nature of that drama.

Viewed in this light, Webb shockingly insisted that the Great Frontier was as important a determinant in modern history as the Renaissance, the Reformation, or capitalism. And further, he offered a "subthesis" which he labelled "the Boom" theory. "The 'wonder' of land and products, the outlet for excess population, the opportunity for constantly expanding commerce, these and other auxiliary developments created and sustained the boom until somewhere between 1890 and 1910. The end came when the Metropolis reached the limits of its dominance over the technically backward 'non-Western peoples' and met with resistance. He also found more true democracy (equity?) in the frontier areas because there society had to allow the widest play of individualism and offered the greatest opportunities to men of energy and capacity whatever their origins.

Given all this, and more too, the author concluded that the period 1500-1910 was in no way normal; it was unique inasmuch as the boom, previously absent in history and now dissipated, will not invigorate the Metropolis in the future.

So all-embracing and stimulating were these Cassandric-like generalizations that Walter Webb hurled at the fraternity of "social scientists" that many of the sceptics rode roughshod over his work, questioning or ignoring totally his line in the frontier areas because of them deemed insufficient research or misinterpretations of his facts. The Texan might have defended his thesis and supplied supporting data had he not been killed in 1962 in an automobile accident.

What about Walter Webb and his teaching today? Where do we stand? At Austin he has become a traditional figure: "The greatest historian ever to come out of Texas," and the University of Texas Press keeps his two seminal works in print, both in hardcover and paperback. This year the Press has published two books that add to the growing Webb canon. *Essays on Walter Prescott Webb* is a collection of four of the memorial lectures given annually at the university. These deal with Webb and the South, the Australian Frontier, Webb's *Arid West*: Four Decades Later, and the Great Frontier Hypothesis. And *Inter-national Law* they indicate that at last his theses are being examined understandingly and critically. The second book, *The Making of a History: Walter Prescott Webb and the Great Plains*, by Gregory M. Tobin, an Australian who never met the historian, is confined to an examination of the origins of *The Great Plains*. It is an unexciting though highly informative doctoral work by too great reliance upon the psychoanalytical model of Erik H. Erikson in *Young Man Luther*. A full-scale biography of Walter Webb is now being prepared.

During the quarter-century since the publication of *The Great Frontier* it appears to the reviewer that world events have tended to echo ever more deeply the essential validity of the great-frontier hypothesis and to buttress many of the subsidiary ideas. Webb never claimed massive task; he stressed frequently the need for European scholars to test the Metropolitan side of the story. "It is my opinion that it will take twenty-five years for this thesis to be accepted or rejected," he once said. "It was like the people he wrote about: a pioneer, and successors would piece out the story. Professor Webb's scorn about 'the new frontiers' so dear to politicians and business leaders is being vindicated today. 'New chapter in world history' is being written in much the way he predicted.

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# The human machinery

By P. J. P. Whitehead

C. U. M. SMITH:

The Problem of Life: An Essay on the Origins of Biological Thought. 343pp. Macmillan, £10.

The problem of "life" is no less than the problem of "death", is so fraught with philosophical-religious profundities that only a thoroughgoing iconoclastic urge can devalue itself into the notion of objective inquiry. This inquiry is biology, a word coined right at the beginning of the nineteenth century for an activity that for us seems always to have been concerned with the fundamental question: what is life? In retrospect, it is very easy to see the religious, moral and other constraints that have in our view warped past biological thinking, most especially in this central problem, but it is less simple to disentangle the contemporary social threads or even, being rather clurlish, to ask whether we are posing the right sort of questions.

Granted that the modern biologist dismisses the flagrantly contradictory phrase "life after death" as outside his professional field and thus not within his terms of reference; yet, many biologists still worship at their particular shrines and even the most materialistic would hardly gainsay the vision of Wordsworth, Homer, Hafiz or Plato as being of equal merit in probing the problem of life. There is an implicit duality and although it is with the biological questions and answers that *The Problem of Life* is concerned, there are constantly reflected in that other well of human speculation.

The trick, as C. U. M. Smith understands it, is not to attempt to integrate the scientific and artistic visions, but to see them as complementary. By way of analogy, he points to the complementarity principle of quantum physics: an entity may for some purposes be treated as a particle, but for others it must be seen as a wave. So in biology, not only as one ascends the scale *natura* from micro-organisms to man, passing from mechanistic to mentalistic organization,

## Descartes dixit

By P. M. S. Hacker

Descartes' Conversation with Burman. Translated with introduction and commentary by John Cottingham. 133pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £6.50.

Many a philosopher must, in moments of revulsion, have asked the question Kant or Hegel, Berkeley or Hume about the correct interpretation of some obscure passage in their writings, and to challenge them to resolve an apparent inconsistency in their arguments. *Descartes' Conversation with Burman* is a detailed report on an exhaustive philosophical interrogation of the "father of modern philosophy".

On April 16, 1648, only two years before Descartes' death, Franz Burman, a twenty-year-old student, visited Descartes at his home at Elpenor. With him he apparently brought the text of Descartes' *Discourse* in which he had picked out for scrutiny more than seventy passages from the *Meditations*, *Replies to Objections*, *Principles of Philosophy* and *Discourse*. The conversation, as it is called, and is evidently an extensive interview. Burman raised more than eighty difficulties, many of which penetrate to the heart of Cartesian metaphysics. In the replies to his questions we have Descartes' final thoughts on major issues in his philosophy, for he produced no further philosophical writings in the last two years of his life.

After the interview Burman wrote a detailed account of their discussion (which, as would be expected, had been conducted in Latin). The account captures the quality of the debate. Each exchange begins with a quotation from Descartes' writings followed

tion, but also at different levels of organization within the animal. This seems to be an excellent approach to the development of biological thought even if, as here, no deeper conclusions emerge.

This book is not just another history of biology, of which there are plenty, but a very successful attempt to take Shelley's "Then, what is life? I cried" as a central theme for exploring biological ideas from the birth of Western science to this moment when the possibility of extra-terrestrial life can be remotely but deliberately investigated. Essentially, it charts the ascendancy of the Cartesian over the Aristotelian vision of the nature of life, the triumph of the mechanistic over the teleological and hints

## Information content

By D. M. Mackay

KENNETH SAYRE: *Cybernetics and the Philosophy of Mind*. 265pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £6.95.

The director of the Philosophie Institute at Notre Dame University is well known for his long-standing concern with the theme of "Minds and Machines". As he has also written an authoritative work on Plato's analytic method, one could expect his latest volume, *Cybernetics and the Philosophy of Mind*, to reflect an unusual breadth of scholarship. It does. In preparation for what purports to be "an entirely original approach to the mind-body problem" Kenneth Sayre has obviously read quite widely and (for the most part) carefully. His book can be read as a handy outline and guide to the literature on a vast range of topics from communication theory and thermodynamics through molecular biology to evolutionary theory and psychology. There is a bibliography with roughly 150 entries.

When a communication signal identifies one out of two equally likely possibilities, it

here and there at the cost of this triumph. Biological themes are well-timed, religious and philosophical ones so that although highly selective, the overall effect is of a very eventful journey through two millennia of human endeavour.

After a brief look at the pre-history of biology, the story properly unfolds in the sixth century BC with the rise of speculation in the Ionian cities, and especially at Miletus. For nearly a third of the book, and ranging from Thales to the geniuses of the westward diaspora and back to the Aegean and Aristotle, the eastern Mediterranean culture is explored for its relevance to the problem of life.

The essentially practical basis of

is said to yield one "unit of information". Identification of one out of eight, three units; and so on. The logarithmic quantity so measured is sometimes called "information" by engineers; but as its inventor Claude Shannon had to point out, this is really a misnomer. What he defined was the specifying power of an item of information, not the concept of information itself. In spite of all this, the declared aim of Professor Sayre's book is to take the concept of information, technically defined in communication theory, as the basis for a conceptual framework in which physical and mental activities can be coherently related. As such the aim is hardly original; but there is still plenty of need for conceptual clarification of the kind that a sharp philosophical mind could bring to the enterprise.

Unfortunately, hopes of such clarification are not always sustained. Indeed, there are several stretches of his chosen territory where Professor Sayre's grasp is manifestly (if understandably) over-extended. At the distressing consequence, at the outset we are told inaccurately that the quantity defined by Shannon measures "an increase in probability of the event in question". With a lack of precision surprising in a philosopher, the same concept is then equated with "a decrease in uncertainty"—as if

Tannery and to the Haldane and Ross English translation. Readers will be grateful for this.

Not only are Dr Cottingham's editing and translation impeccable, but he has also supplied an extensive exegetical and philosophical commentary on the text. Here he does not merely provides numerous cross-references to supporting (or conflicting) remarks in Descartes' writings, and correspondence, but engages in a philosophical exegesis and criticism. Where Descartes' replies are weak, Dr Cottingham often suggests how they might have been strengthened by inferences to his other writings. Where Descartes appears to contradict claims he had made elsewhere, Dr Cottingham endeavours, often ingeniously and successfully, to reconcile the apparently contradictory contentions. And when Descartes blunders, Dr Cottingham points it out, and explains the source of the problem.

In addition to this outstanding commentary, Dr Cottingham has provided a forty-page introduction in which he gives a lively and informative account of the *Conversation*, its transcription, editing and so on. This is followed by short but illuminating discussions of four central topics in the *Conversation* and the *Principles*, the metaphysics upon which the *Conversation* is based, the will, and the mind. All are of interest, but the most striking concerns the Circle, for the evidence of the *Conversation* gives very strong support to Anthony Kenny's interpretation of this vexed and recently much debated issue in Cartesian metaphysics.

All Cartesian scholars and students should be grateful to Dr Cottingham for his labours. Finally, one must congratulate the Clarendon Press for having found an attractive, simple and apposite typography and layout for what was clearly a difficult text to produce.

scientists and philosophers have always had contemporary technology quite literally and in a tactile way "at their fingertips". Thus, technologies (no less than social structures) have been channelled speculation towards meaningful and useful ends, supplying the tools of research, the goals of research and often the web of not only obvious, but acceptable explanation. This insight, which probably lacks only a scholarly rapier to be thoroughly Marxian, cultivates the book and raises it above the sterile tracing of ideas for their own sake.

Since the time of Thomas Aquinas, Aristotelian exegesis has been a major (and to the non-philosopher an often wearisome) scholarly industry. However, Dr Smith has a light about his business. Like tout, here as elsewhere, and the Stagyrta's metaphysics, physics and biology are tightly woven into the theme of the book. The leap to Descartes, in many ways the turning point for biological ideas, is fairly rapidly accomplished. The way is now clear for the mechanization of physiology, leading, as logically as the technology that accompanied it, in the concept of the brain as a highly sophisticated automaton. What the Gouthe and Wordsworth, provides a breathing space before the circle is complete and we enter an age which can seriously discuss whether the computer of the not-so-distant future will exhibit what we are pleased to call "life".

In addition to the book's general theme, the replacement of a teleological account of the world—the author follows a number of other threads. Although the problem of life is basically a question of what separates the animate from the inanimate, there lurks an implicit choice between a continuum and a hierarchy.

Linnaeus for one was content to hedge his bets, stating in one famous aphorism: *Lupinus crescent, vagabunda crescent at vivunt, animalia crescent, vivunt et sentiunt*. The *Natura non facit saltus*. Demarcation, the boundaries has proved not less but more difficult as scientific skills have advanced, but an additional hazard has been the early and teleological importation of consciousness (and the soul) into the problem of life, thus providing for another boundary to define. Since the boundary problem has lain equally in the social/moral/religious province, one sees the delicate course that Darwin had to tread. Dr Smith shows us how the very early attack on one of the problem's pillars, physics, within the philosophy of reductionism, nibbled at the other. Both tended to an unsatisfactory mechanistic answer.

Although the subtitle of the book specifies the origins of biological thought, the construction and indeed the sense of the story seems to demand more consideration of contemporary notions about life. Cybernetics finds mention, but only in passing, while the adventures of C. H. Waddington and his colleagues in the Villa Serbelloni on Lake Como, published in *A Theoretical Biology* (1968-72), are ignored. This is a pity, because Dr Smith begins by posing a modern definition of "life", then works backwards through books towards it and ends by trying to reconcile it with the poet's vision and its lingering feeling that life must be more than just a peculiar form of organization of matter.

The four Villa Serbelloni symposia are highly germane because they hint at subtleties in this organization that for our grand-children may raise the definition of life far beyond the taint of mechanism. In fact Waddington, in a preparatory and purposefully provocative document circulated before the first symposium, set the discussion in motion by asking the very question that begins the present book (and supplying some very interesting reflections).

However, this criticism of content is more than compensated by my admiration for the form of the book. Illustrations, maps, chronological tables and diagrams are excellent; difficult ideas are simply stated without cheating the reader of their complexity; every effort has been made to cite modern editions and translations of early works; and the references are not just left in footnotes but are tied to a very full bibliography at the end. Dr Smith sets out to interest and instruct the non-biologist and non-philosopher, as well as the professional, and in this he wholly succeeds.

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## The philosopher-kings

By Anthony Delius

LADIPO ADAMOLEKUN: *Sékou Touré's Guinea*. 256pp. Methuen, £5 (paperback, £2.95).

JOHN HATCH:

*Two African Statesmen*. Kaunda of Zambia and Nyerere of Tanzania. 268pp. Secker and Warburg, £6.

Africa's four dozen rulers have made various approaches to the huge difficulties of government on their continent. There are tyrants like Amin of Uganda, political soldiers doing their best like Nimeiry of the Sudan, and astute pragmatists like Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast. Then there are those who quite consciously are attempting to contribute something new to government both in Africa and the world generally, leaders like Sékou Touré of Guinea, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.

Discussion of Touré, Nyerere, and Kaunda and their adventures in thought and deed is almost continuous among the great regiment of Africanists. The latest examination of Sékou Touré is by a fellow West African, Ladipo Adamolekun, lecturer at a Nigerian university. Nyerere and Kaunda appear side by side in *Two African Statesmen*, a new book by John Hatch, writer of ten previous works on African subjects. Both authors try ultimately to set their subjects in an even wider context than that of the sub-Saharan landmass and its peoples.

Mr Hatch is perhaps the more ambitious in this regard, telling us "Kaunda and Nyerere will be judged more significantly as statesmen offering original policies on the national and international scene. Both men came within the category of 'deserter-king'." Dr Adamolekun discusses Touré as that rare being, "the charismatic and flexible leader... the only leader of this kind that has emerged in West Africa". The author invites comparison between the Guinean leader and the "charismatic" John F. Kennedy, as well as earlier American "nation-building" presidents.

All three of these African leaders maintain that their ruling philosophies are fitted not simply to local man but man everywhere. Though refusing to be called a Marxist, Touré has instituted a form of government in which the replica of those in Eastern Europe. Tanzania's one-party state, though with vigorous electoral competition within the single party, is said by Nyerere to be essentially universal socialism home-grown from some African seeds. Kaunda, whose ideas owe much to his friend Nyerere,

prefers to call his general system "humanism".

There is another sense in which all three countries employ the same system, one requiring some degree of dependence on foreign capital and foreign expertise. Dr Adamolekun puts it thus:

All post-colonial African countries can be said to have opted for a neo-colonial economy with only a difference of degree. The Ivory Coast in West Africa and Kenya in East Africa are examples of highly neo-colonial economies, while Guinea in West Africa and Tanzania in East Africa are examples of small degree neo-colonial economies. It is significant that while Ivory Coast and Kenya are grouped among the more economically developed states, Guinea and Tanzania are grouped among the less...

However, Dr Adamolekun suggests tentatively, Guinea and Tanzania may have succeeded better in the more important task of "building a nation". No convincing demonstration is offered that Guineans are in fact better pastured than Ivorians, or Tanzanians more closely bound than Kenyans. It also seems accepted by nearly every present black leader that there is only one practical step forward into the future out of Africa's ancient mosaic of 700 or so tribal complex, which is to take the fifty odd lots into which the old colonial powers divided up this marvellous ethnic variety and convert them into fifty nations.

Nyerere may have had some nagging doubts. At one stage he envisaged a "back to the land" policy, the country's independence so that it could emerge simultaneously into sovereignty with Kenya and Uganda as an East African Federation. Considering the ruined condition of the subsequent East African Community today, his countrymen may be glad he had to give up the idea. Guinea rejected a place in what would have been a French-dominated community to arrive precipitately at a lonely independence. An offer of union with Nyerere's Guinea proved to be ephemeral. Kaunda first tore his country out of the white-dominated Central African Federation to begin his nation-building.

At first glance, Touré's job seems the easier one. He has to manage the affairs of two million people, as against nearly three times that number in Zambia, and seven times more in Tanzania. He has gone about the work of producing unity with a vision and a logic that he owes to his French education and his own political theory. His efforts have produced the most streamlined totalitarian state on the continent, with every available citizen locked from the cradle to the grave into the single political party, the Democratic Party of Guinea, the PDG. Touré once boasted that he had made his

people so like-minded that he could claim: "Shout at two o'clock in the morning in any remote village, 'Imperialism?', and you will hear the reply, 'Down with it!'"

A more substantial claim might be that Touré's system has brought people at village level into more sustained discussion of policy than has any other form of government in Africa. This includes Tanzania, where Nyerere once gave up the presidency for a year to live among and listen to the ordinary people.

Certainly Touré appears to have made great progress in drawing some of West Africa's most antagonistic tribes into a single nation. He put the goal strikingly to his countrymen:

Let us accept to become new men: let us accept to kill in ourselves the Malinké man, the Soussou man, the Toma man, the Guerzé man; let us accept to be transformed into new men, fit to rehabilitate Guinea and Africa, fit to serve the universal cause of man.

At least Touré has carried out his attack on tribalism more deliberately than Kaunda who, in fits and starts, has stormed, wept, prayed, and even briefly resigned to persuade his countrymen that they are Zambians first and Bemba, Lozi, Tonga, etc. second, if at all. Tanzania is lucky that it has such a multiplicity of tribal groups that there is little to be gained by trying to promote the dominance of one.

Nevertheless Touré has to make known as "ethnic arithmetic" to balance the various population groups in the administration and leadership. (Who are we, in Britain, to criticize amid the growing clamour of Scots, Welsh, Irish, etc. over what they see as 300 years of neglect?) At the same time the Guinean leader apparently finds it necessary to use regular discoveries of plots, whether from left or right, real or imaginary, to provoke frantic displays of nationalism. Finally, even as he has achieved his end, he has at the expense of turning a quarter of the population into exiles, the highest rate of exile in Africa.

His economic theories have largely succeeded in keeping Guinea poverty-stricken when it has the resources to be one of Africa's more prosperous nations. His organization has mainly failed to collect or distribute many of the necessities of life, and the real business of the country is in the hands of the black market, efficiently run by the officials, disbanding entrepreneurs. Such is the most important policy of all in a continent where 80 per cent of the population live on the land, agricultural policy, has been a story of continuous failure in Guinea, with each new disaster being met with a change of names and little else.

By the year 2000 it might be judged by achievements in agricultural organization and production. On present progress few accolades

ever, the largest—the Zion Christian Church in the northern Transvaal, with 200,000 adherents—successfully claims a recognition that it has never officially received. "Any government takes account of power", Dr Sundkler shrewdly comments. There is a contrast between the ZCC and the "secret prayer meetings" in Soweto.

In Zululand Dr Sundkler extends his observations to Swaziland, where, in the only African state where traditional rites of kingship are still performed, Zionist bishops have attended them since 1930, and have thereby shown their respect for customs which the more rigid missions would condemn; later they have also upheld the girls' puberty ceremonies. The king, Sobhuza II, declared in 1939 that the various Zionist sects were "the best of the best of the National Church which would hold an annual coronation on Good Friday at the royal kraal. The son of one of their leaders, now a senator, recently said in a debate that the Swazi must 'cure and retain' their national customs. Thus one of the contrasts here with the reports from urban areas that younger Africans are interested in no church at all but Dr Sundkler has pointed out that Zionism is largely a rural phenomenon.

may be accorded Kenneth Kaunda's Zambia, whose copper mines give it by far the best economic start of all three countries. No doubt the leader of the "Frontline" black state closed in on three sides with struggles against white and colonial domination, Kaunda has had to overcome ferocious difficulties—and he has certainly not then with remarkable steadfastness. Still, he might have done better if he had devoted some of his ability to land reform. In *Two African Statesmen*, John Hatch tells us that Kaunda would have chosen to have been a farmer if destiny and the times had not swept him into politics. Yet after a decade of independence, what failure of the political imagination made it necessary that Zambia had to turn to succour to large imports of food from her "enemies", South Africa and Rhodesia?

Then again one is inclined to ask whether imagination would have helped. Kaunda's neighbour, Nyerere, tirelessly propounds and puts into practice one of the most astute and admirable schemes in Africa—the so-called ujamaa scheme of Ujamaa villages. This is the idea of cultivating "self-reliance" by rural collective enterprise based on the African extended family system and experience in Muslim China. It seems ideally suited to a country where nine-tenths of the people are on the land, and there is no industry or mineral wealth to speak of. Yet so far the Ujamaa scheme has failed to inspire the Tanzanians to leave their villages for the Ujamaa villages. It has been seen in Mr Vorster's company, even in the most hopeful days of southern African "détente".

Yet one does begin to catch something of Mr Hatch's warmth of feeling for both leaders, to accept that there must be a great deal of substance to make him describe them as "philosophers" or not, they have been good. But the related, humble, balanced, accompanying philosophy lessons with playing golf, reading, translating, watching football, playing with children? Whether this makes them "philosophers" or not, they are making figures to have at the start of the long, long trail of Africa's return to governing itself.

Next to Dr Adamolekun's cool assessment of Touré's successes and failures, much of Mr Hatch's account of Nyerere and Kaunda reads like a glowing testimonial. He compares their Christian beliefs, and their statesmanship favourably with Mr Wilson's dip-

## The growth industry

By Robert Cassen

LORD WALSTON: *Dealing With Hunger*. 152pp. Bodley Head, £3.50.

Lord Walston has had a fine career, much of it, after teaching at Cambridge and Harvard, as a high official dealing with agriculture in a variety of British and international organizations. As one might expect, his new book gives a lucid account of the development of international food policy and practice. But he is much better on agriculture—in the rich countries at least—than on hunger. Hunger in developing countries is primarily a problem of poverty, and to a lesser extent, a problem of food supplies. Very great numbers of people in Africa and Asia cannot afford an adequate diet at prices that will induce the required volume of food production. The hardest part of "dealing with hunger" is the generation of employment and incomes for the poor; satisfying the demand for food that would result is, politically and economically, a lesser—though still of course very costly—task. To a large extent the solution is a complementary one: much of the employment needed will be in agriculture itself.

Such a perspective is missing here; the concentration is on agricultural supply. Even on this subject a curious lack of realism occasionally appears within the prevailing good sense. Thus one of the book's proposals is that food prices everywhere should be raised by a figure of the order of 10 per cent, so as to transfer income from consumers to producers of food. As a member of the European Parliament, Lord Walston must be well aware of the difficulties of such a proposal inside the EEC; in developing countries the difficulties are no smaller, if different in nature. Similarly he expresses an enthusiasm for mechanization and tech-

nical progress in agriculture, with only one sentence about the possibility of adverse employment consequences in poor countries. There is a general air of being "above politics", best illustrated in a comparison of agricultural performance in Israel, Cuba, Iran, and the United States. In their different ways and with their differing political systems have demonstrated what can be done... But might not the political systems be entirely important, and are there not situations where agricultural advances requires political change?

A just complaint—Lord Walston supports the idea of international food buffer stocks, but he does not thoroughly discuss the very real difficulties of management they would entail. All that is said is whether the huge sums that would be absorbed in some versions of the scheme might not be put to better uses. But any further complaints would be justified only about more definitive work than the author intended. In 150 not unduly cramped pages the non-specialist will find a readable, enlightening and instructive introduction to many aspects of the world's food problems. And he will not be told that the problems are going to be solved by his eating less himself.

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